

DON'T LEAVE THE HOUSE

Written by

Ryan Peverly

c/o 117 Debbie Drive
Eaton, Preble, Ohio
937-341-3473
ryanpeverly@protonmail.com

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (NIGHT)

The room is a fortress.

Furniture pushed against windows, multiple deadbolts on the front door, security bars visible.

Sunlight should be streaming through gaps in the barricades, but instead there's only a grayish-blackish twilight.

Six friends sit around the coffee table. Empty food containers and water bottles scattered around tell the story of their dwindling supplies.

JORDAN (mid-20s, white, naturally authoritative) opens a can of soup - one of only two remaining. He holds it up, shakes it. Nearly empty.

He reaches for the box of crackers. Also nearly empty. He shakes that too. A few sad crumbs rattle inside.

JESS (mid-20s, white, practical) watches him, then opens the peanut butter jar. She scrapes the sides with a knife, gathering what little remains. Maybe a tablespoon.

CHLOE (early 20s, Black, perpetually anxious) unwraps a granola bar, breaks it into careful pieces. She counts them. Six pieces from one bar. She looks at the five remaining bars, does the math in her head. Her face falls.

TREY (mid-20s, Black, confident, risk-taker) holds up two water bottles - all that's left under the sink. He sets them down with a hollow plastic sound.

LEXY (early 20s, Latina, increasingly paranoid) tears open a piece of bread. It's stale. She makes a face, but eats it anyway.

The silence stretches as they all stare at their meager supplies.

Jordan's stomach GROWLS audibly. Everyone looks at him.

JORDAN

Sorry.

Jess holds up a nearly empty jar of peanut butter.

JESS

This isn't going to last.

She sets it down harder than necessary.

LEXY
(still chewing stale
bread)
Neither is this.

She holds up the loaf. More air than bread.

TREY
(checking under the sink
again)
Water's not much better.

He holds up one of the bottles to the light. Less than half full.

CHLOE
What about delivery?

Everyone turns to look at her.

CHLOE
DoorDash? Grocery delivery?

JESS
With what money?

Jess pulls out her phone, shows the screen to the group. Her banking app shows a balance that makes everyone wince.

LEXY
(checking her own phone)
Same.

TREY
(reluctantly checking his)
Yeah.

JORDAN
So that's not happening.

Chloe breaks her granola bar piece into even smaller pieces.

CHLOE
So what do we do?

Jordan stands up, walks to the barricaded front door. He peers through a gap in the boards.

JORDAN
Someone has to go out there.

CHLOE
No one has to go anywhere.

JORDAN

Unless you've figured out how to
photosynthesize, someone definitely
has to go.

LEXY

How the hell you gonna
photosynthesize when there isn't
any sunlight?

JESS

Fair question. Response?

JORDAN

I got nothing.

TREY

I'll go.

CHLOE

No.

TREY

Someone has to.

He stands up, walks to the window, looks out through another
gap.

TREY

Stores are what, ten minutes away?

LEXY

Assuming they're still open.

TREY

They're open.

LEXY

Assuming they have anything left.

TREY

They do.

LEXY

Assuming you make it back.

That stops everyone cold.

Jordan returns to the coffee table, picks up his clipboard.
Starts writing, but his hand shakes slightly.

JORDAN

We need...everything.

He writes "FOOD" at the top of the list, underlines it twice.

JESS
(grabbing the pen)
Batteries.

She adds it to the list.

CHLOE
Medical supplies.

Added to the list.

LEXY
More barricade materials.

Added. They all stare at the growing list. It's overwhelming.

TREY
That's a lot of stops.

JORDAN
That's a lot of risk.

Chloe moves closer to Trey, takes his hand.

CHLOE
I don't want you to go.

TREY
I don't want me to go either.

He squeezes her hand.

TREY
But I'm the fastest. Strongest.
Most likely to make it back.

LEXY
Full offense taken.

JORDAN
I mean, I've lost some muscle mass
the last couple weeks but still.

JESS
We should draw straws. Fair is
fair.

TREY
This isn't about fair. It's about
who has the best chance out there.

CHLOE
What if something happens?

TREY
Nothing's going to happen.

But he doesn't sound convinced.

LEXY
Famous last words. Listen to this.
(reading from phone)
"They look human from a distance,
but up close you can tell
something's changed. The eyes are
different. The way they move."

TREY
That's vague as shit.

LEXY
(still reading)
"My neighbor Steve came to my door
asking for help. But it wasn't
Steve. Not really. Same face, same
voice, but something fundamental
was missing."

CHLOE
What do you think was missing?

LEXY
(looking up)
His humanity.

TREY
This is exactly why I need to go
out there. To see what's actually
happening instead of reading ghost
stories on the internet.

CHLOE
Trey...

TREY
Someone has to go, Clo. We can't
keep DoorDashing everything. Too
expensive.

LEXY
True that shit.

TREY

Look, we got, what, three hours out there? Stores are like ten minutes away. I'd be gone two hours tops.

CHLOE

What if there's a line? Like, a long line?

TREY

Babe. Relax. I got it.

JORDAN

Okay, back to the supply run. Trey, you sure you want to do this alone?

TREY

I'm good, man.

JESS

What about weapons? Protection?

JORDAN

We've got the stakes. The garlic. Crucifixes. Mirrors.

LEXY

Because those will definitely work against whatever's out there.

TREY

There's nothing out there except scared people and empty stores.

LEXY

You sound pretty confident for someone who hasn't left this house in twelve days.

TREY

And you sound pretty paranoid for someone whose information comes entirely from social media.

JESS

Stop. We need things. Trey's willing to go. Let's figure out the details and stop arguing about hypotheticals.

JORDAN

(writing)

Okay. Three-hour window. Check-in calls every hour.

CHLOE

What about our game night?

TREY

Is that more important? I mean, I'd like to have a proper meal tonight.

CHLOE

Why don't we order pizza?

LEXY

We just said we can't keep DoorDashing everything.

CHLOE

Pizza delivery isn't DoorDash.

LEXY

No, but DoorDash is pizza delivery for, like, everything else.

JORDAN

That's true. They stole the business model.

TREY

Guys, seriously, who gives a fuck about DoorDash?

JESS

Agreed. Can we get back on track?

JORDAN

Where were we?

TREY

I wanted to leave now. Chloe suggested I wait.

CHLOE

I just want some normalcy tonight. I need to, like, mentally prepare for you leaving.

JESS

That's fair. Trey?

TREY

Fine. First thing tomorrow.

JORDAN

I'll order the pizza.

TIME CUT:

A sharp KNOCK at the front door.

The room goes instantly silent. Everyone freezes.

Jordan grabs a WOODEN STAKE off a table and moves quietly to the barricaded window.

He peers through a small gap in the boards.

Outside, he sees a PIZZA GUY (20s, tired, company uniform) holding pizza boxes, checking his phone, wearing a GARLIC NECKLACE around his neck.

Jordan starts removing the barricades -- sliding furniture, unlatching multi

He opens the door, keeping the security chain attached. Through the gap, Pizza Guy holds up the boxes.

PIZZA GUY
Two large pepperonis, one supreme?

Jordan holds up a small MIRROR through the gap.

JORDAN
Look in this real quick.

PIZZA GUY
Uh...okay?

The Pizza Guy looks in the mirror.

Jordan studies his reflection carefully, then angles the mirror so he can see the guy's reflection.

He withdraws the mirror, satisfied.

JORDAN
How's it been out there?

PIZZA GUY
Slow, I guess. People are weird about deliveries now.

He gestures to his garlic necklace.

PIZZA GUY
Manager makes us wear these. Says it makes customers feel safer.

JORDAN
Does it work?

PIZZA GUY
You tell me. You're the one testing
me with a mirror.

Jordan unhooks the chain, opens the door wider. Pizza Guy
holds three pizza boxes.

PIZZA GUY
You guys really think it's that bad
out here?

JORDAN
People say it is.

PIZZA GUY
People say a lot of things. I
haven't seen anything weird,
though. Well, this one lady made me
stand under her porch light for
like five minutes while she looked
at me through the window.

JORDAN
What was she looking for?

PIZZA GUY
Hell if I know. Making sure I had a
reflection maybe?

He glances at the mirror still in Jordan's hand.

PIZZA GUY
Like you just did.

Uncomfortable silence.

PIZZA GUY
Sorry. I know it's not funny.
People seem really freaked out.

Trey appears and hands him cash for a tip.

PIZZA GUY
Thanks, man. You guys stay safe,
alright?

JORDAN
You too.

Pizza Guy walks back toward his beat-up car.

Jordan immediately begins re-barricading the door -- multiple
locks, security bar, furniture.

The group stands in the entryway holding pizza boxes, processing the interaction.

JORDAN
Even the pizza guy's wearing garlic
now.

JESS
Smart.

TREY
Or paranoid.

LEXY
Same thing these days.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The group returns to the living room, pizza boxes in hand.

Jordan reaches for the remote, clicks on the TV almost automatically -- the way people do when they eat.

A NEWS ANCHOR appears mid-report.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV)
...twelfth consecutive day without
any reported sunlight. Experts
continue to offer conflicting
theories...

Chloe sets down her slice, suddenly not hungry.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV)
...while officials urge citizens to
limit their atmospheric exposure
during peak danger hours.

CHLOE
Peak danger hours?

She looks around at the others.

Jordan clicks to another channel. Different anchor, same story. He clicks again. And again.

Every channel -- news, weather, even a cooking show that's been interrupted by emergency broadcasts.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL (ON TV)
Preliminary data suggests more than
three hours of exposure to the
environment outside may cause
individuals to turn into the
vampiric state.

Chloe freezes with pizza halfway in her mouth.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL (ON TV)
We urge you to monitor yourself and
other household members for
symptoms of this turn, and to stay
home, especially during peak danger
hours of 9 AM to 9 PM.

TREY
(reaching for remote)
Why are we watching this shit? I
thought we agreed on normalcy.

Jordan pulls the remote away, keeps clicking.

Each channel shows variations of fear -- reporters with
obvious makeup to hide exhaustion, officials reading prepared
statements with shaking hands, "BREAKING NEWS" graphics that
never seem to break to anything new.

A LOCAL REPORTER appears on screen, broadcasting from what
looks like an empty shopping mall.

LOCAL REPORTER (ON TV)
...significant behavioral changes
in approximately forty percent of
individuals who exceed the
recommended exposure time...

Chloe looks at Trey with growing concern.

LOCAL REPORTER (ON TV)
...families are encouraged to
establish safety protocols...

On screen, the reporter interviews a haggard-looking woman
holding a photo of her missing husband.

MISSING HUSBAND'S WIFE (ON TV)
He was only supposed to be gone for
groceries. That was three days ago.

Chloe's eyes widen. She looks at Trey.

Jordan clicks to another channel. A SCIENTIST in a lab coat
gestures at charts and graphs.

SCIENTIST (ON TV)
The correlation between extended
exposure and behavioral
modification is undeniable...

Jordan clicks again. A RELIGIOUS LEADER at a podium.

RELIGIOUS LEADER (ON TV)
...this is a test of faith in these
dark times...

Click. A MILITARY SPOKESMAN.

MILITARY SPOKESMAN (ON TV)
...containment protocols remain in
effect...

Click. A THERAPIST in a home office setup.

THERAPIST (ON TV)
...isolation can create paranoid
ideation...

TREY
(grabbing the remote)
Enough.

He clicks off the TV. The sudden silence is almost worse than
the noise.

TREY
This is exactly what they want.
Keep people scared and isolated.

CHLOE
Or maybe they're trying to warn us.

TREY
About what? Some made-up vampire
bullshit?

CHLOE
You don't think it's real?

TREY
I think people are losing their
minds and this shit's...
(gesturing to the TV)
...making it worse.

Lexy checks her phone.

LEXY
This whole thing is coordinated.

JESS

By who?

LEXY

Government. Corporations. People
with an agenda.

JORDAN

Sounds like paranoia to me.

LEXY

Is it? When was the last time you
questioned anything they told you?

JORDAN

The news outlets don't even agree
with each other.

LEXY

That's the point. Confusion.
Conflicting information. Nobody
knows what to believe.

CHLOE

So we just ignore everything?

LEXY

We think for ourselves.

TREY

That's why we turn that shit off.

The lights flicker slightly. Jordan glances at it.

JORDAN

Power's been weird all week.

LEXY

That's what happens when you tell
maintenance crews not to work
outside anymore.

TREY

Okay, enough doom and gloom. Let's
eat the pizza and play some games.

JESS

Amen to that.

TIME CUT:

Lexy dramatically rolls dice, her movements exaggerated. When
she moves her piece, she cheers louder than necessary.

LEXY

And THAT is how you dominate in
Apocalypse Road! Pay up, fool!

Jordan begrudgingly hands over game money, but his smile
doesn't reach his eyes.

JORDAN

This game is rigged.

LEXY

Says the loser.

TREY

She's not wrong. You're terrible at
this, man.

JORDAN

I'm preserving my resources for the
long game.

JESS

Is that what we're calling
bankruptcy now?

Everyone laughs, but it's too loud, too long. The laughter
dies out awkwardly.

Chloe sits beside Trey, but she's staring at her phone
instead of the game board. She's texting, ignoring her turn.

TREY

Hey. Your turn.

Chloe looks up, startled, as if she forgot where she was.

CHLOE

Sorry.
(puts phone down)
What did I miss?

LEXY

Just me crushing Jordan's spirit.

JESS

And his fake money empire.

Another round of forced laughter. Jordan takes a swig from a
water bottle that clearly doesn't contain water.

TREY

Everything cool?

Chloe picks up her phone again, checks for messages.

CHLOE
I don't know. My mom's texting a lot. More than usual.

She shows him the screen - multiple unread messages from "Mom."

TREY
Maybe you should call her.

CHLOE
But we wanted normalcy.

She gestures around the game table, but "normalcy" feels like a performance they're all struggling to maintain.

TREY
Stop with the people pleasing. Call her.

Chloe's phone BUZZES with another text from MOM. She reads it, her face growing more concerned.

CHLOE
I'll be right back.

She gets up quickly, almost knocking over the game board in her haste to leave.

INT. CHLOE AND TREY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Chloe makes the call. Her mom, REGINA (50s, Black, still attractive but visibly stressed, wearing a robe, clearly hasn't slept well) appears on screen.

Through the video call, we can see Regina's kitchen behind her: dishes piled high in the sink, a small TV playing news in the background, empty food containers scattered on counters.

REGINA
(through phone)
Hi, baby. How are you holding up?

CHLOE
Hi, Mom. I'm fine. How are you?

Regina forces a smile, but her hands shake slightly as she adjusts the phone.

Behind her, we glimpse elaborate barricades covering her windows, similar to the group's setup but more chaotic, desperate.

REGINA
Are you eating? You look thin.

CHLOE
We just ordered pizza.

Regina nods, but her eyes dart nervously toward something off-camera. She gets up, moves around her kitchen restlessly.

CHLOE
You look exhausted. Are you sleeping?

REGINA
(pausing her pacing)
Not really.

Through the video, we see Regina's reflection in her microwave door -- she looks worse than she appears on camera. Dark circles, hollow cheeks.

REGINA
I keep hearing things.

CHLOE
What kind of things?

Regina moves to her back door, checks the locks. Multiple deadbolts, security bars.

REGINA
Scratching. Footsteps on the porch.

She returns to the camera, picks up a pill bottle from the counter. It's empty. She shakes it - nothing rattles inside.

REGINA
Probably just the cats, but...

She gestures helplessly, setting down the empty bottle.

CHLOE
Mom, when's the last time you took your medication?

Regina looks away from the camera, doesn't answer directly. She opens a cabinet, more empty pill bottles visible inside.

REGINA
I can't...I can't go to the pharmacy. Not with everything that's happening.

The camera shows Regina getting up again, moving around her kitchen. Through her window, we see her barricades are more elaborate than the group's -- furniture stacked haphazardly, boards nailed over glass.

CHLOE

Can't you call the pharmacy? Have them deliver?

REGINA

(sitting back down)

They don't DoorDash anxiety pills.

Regina's hands continue shaking as she fidgets with items on her counter -- empty pill bottles, crumpled tissues, rosary.

REGINA

I haven't left this house in two weeks.

She picks up a framed photo of Chloe's father, holds it against her chest.

REGINA

I'm jumping at shadows. Yesterday I spent two hours convinced someone was in my basement.

CHLOE

Was there?

Regina sets down the photo, picks up a flashlight from the counter.

REGINA

Just the water heater making noises. But for two hours I was ready to call the cops. And you know I hate the police.

She clicks the flashlight on and off nervously, testing it.

Trey appears behind Chloe in the frame.

TREY

Hi, Mrs. Patterson.

Regina's face brightens slightly at seeing him.

REGINA

Trey! How are you, sweetheart?

TREY

I'm good. Hey, I didn't mean to eavesdrop but I'd be happy to pick up your medication for you.

Regina stops fidgeting with the flashlight.

REGINA

You'd do that?

TREY

Of course. I have to make a supply run anyway.

REGINA

You're leaving the house?

TREY

I'll be careful.

Regina clutches the photo of her husband tighter.

REGINA

I...I don't know what to say.

TREY

Say you'll call the pharmacy in the morning and let them know.

REGINA

Trey, that's...are you sure? I don't want you risking your life for an old woman's problems.

TREY

You're not old. And you're not a problem. You're family.

Regina's composure breaks. Tears well in her eyes as she looks at the photo in her hands.

REGINA

I'm sorry. I just...I miss your father so much.

She looks directly at Trey through the camera.

REGINA

You remind me so much of my husband. You hold onto this one, Clo.

CHLOE
(smiling)
I plan to.

Regina wipes her eyes, sets the photo back on the counter among the pill bottles and tissues.

REGINA
Good. I'll call the pharmacy first thing in the morning.

CHLOE
Try to get some sleep tonight, please?

Regina picks up the flashlight again, clicks it on.

REGINA
I'll try.

TREY
I'll call you when I'm on my way.

The flashlight beam illuminates Regina's face from below, making her look ghostly.

REGINA
Thank you, hon. Thank you both.

She looks directly into the camera, the flashlight still casting strange shadows.

REGINA
I love you, baby.

CHLOE
I love you too. Sleep tight.

REGINA
Sweet dreams.

The call ends. Regina's final image -- holding the flashlight, surrounded by empty pill bottles and barricades -- lingers on Chloe's phone screen before fading to black.

TREY
She's gonna be fine.

CHLOE
I still don't want you to go.

Trey takes her hands in his.

TREY

I know. But I'm going.

She looks down at their hands.

CHLOE

I keep having these dreams. Where you leave, and when you come back, you're...different. Your eyes, your voice...everything.

TREY

That's your anxiety.

CHLOE

I know. But we've all seen the videos, the reports.

TREY

Videos can be faked and reports can be exaggerated.

CHLOE

All of them?

TREY

AI can do some crazy shit, and the media's gonna mediate.

He moves to the window, looks out through a small gap in the barricade.

TREY

You know what I'm afraid of?

Chloe looks up, surprised by his vulnerability.

TREY

I'm not afraid of anything out there. What I'm afraid of is what happens in here. I'm afraid that we're all gonna change because of this and not recognize each other.

He turns back to her, vulnerability replacing his usual confidence.

TREY

Like, what if you look at me one day and and see someone you don't recognize?

CHLOE

That won't happen.

TREY
How do you know?

CHLOE
Because I know you. The real you.
And I wouldn't let you become
someone else.

TREY
What if you don't have a choice?
What if this whole situation
changes me so much that the person
you fell in love with just...isn't
there anymore?

CHLOE
Then I'll love whoever you become.
As long as you come back to me.

A small smile breaks through his expression.

TREY
That's why I have to go. Not just
for food or meds. To prove to
myself that I can do this without
losing who I am. Without becoming
something we'll all regret.

CHLOE
And what if you don't come back?

TREY
Then keep the door closed. No
matter what I say, no matter how
much I beg. If I'm not back in
time, something went wrong. Don't
let me in.

Tears well in Chloe's eyes.

CHLOE
How can you ask me to do that?

TREY
Because I love you. And I need to
know you'll be safe, even from me.
Especially from me.

He gently wipes a tear from her cheek.

TREY
But it won't come to that, okay? I
promise.

CHLOE

What if the sun never comes back?

TREY

It will. That's how the world
works. Darkness, then light.

She kisses him, desperate and afraid. He returns the kiss,
trying to convey certainty he might not entirely feel.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (NIGHT)

Trey enters the kitchen where Jordan is loading a backpack
with supplies. On the counter: a folded shopping list, a
small flashlight, some cash.

JORDAN

Everything we need.

Jordan hands him the list. Trey scans it quickly.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Trey descends into the basement, walks to where the wooden
stakes are stored. He stares at them, conflicted.

He picks up three stakes, examines them, slides them into the
backpack.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The group gathers in the living room. Everyone looks tense.
Lexy sits on the couch. Jess paces nervously.

Jordan begins systematically removing sections of the front
door barricade, creating a clear exit path.

Chloe approaches Trey, hands him a small silver cross on a
chain. He takes it, puts it around his neck without comment.

Jordan finishes with the barricade.

JORDAN

Alright. Be smart out there, bro.

Trey nods, then approaches the door, backpack secure. He
reaches for the door handle, then pauses.

Trey opens the door...

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

..and steps outside. He turns back to look at his friends framed in the doorway.

JORDAN
Everyone ready?

Jordan holds up his phone, and the others follow suit.

JORDAN
Three hours. Starts... now.

Everyone presses START on their clock app. The display on Chloe's reads 3:00:00 and begins counting down.

Trey nods, adjusts his backpack straps, and starts walking down the driveway.

The door closes behind him with a solid THUD.

SMASH CUT TO:

TITLE:

DON'T LEAVE THE HOUSE

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (NIGHT)

A close-up of a timer ticking down in the clock app of an iPhone, starting at 15:00.

Chloe anxiously sits near a large bay window, heavily barricaded from the inside.

She peers out through a narrow sliver in the window into a suburban landscape, unnaturally PITCH BLACK despite the daylight hour. Rain rattles against the window.

She fidgets with anxiety as she pops the top of a prescription pill bottle and tosses a pill into her mouth, chases it with a swig from a bottle of water.

Jess walks into the room.

JESS
Chloe.

Chloe looks up, her eyes lost.

JESS
We need to talk about how to handle
this if he doesn't come back.

CHLOE
Okay.

Jess walks away. We follow her into the

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jess snakes through to a whiteboard on the wall. A list of household items needed, funny drawings and inspirational quotes are scribbled on it. Chief among them, in the center --

DAYS WITHOUT SUN: 12

She grabs a marker, erases the 12 with her hand and writes 13 in its place. She walks to the back of the kitchen, opens a door already slightly ajar...

INT. BASEMENT STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

...then descends down a stairwell.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jess walks down into an unfinished basement, where Jordan CARVES A STAKE OUT OF A PIECE OF WOOD. A pile of carved wooden stakes lie in an old, wooden crate next to him.

JESS
We need to talk about what we're
gonna do.

JORDAN
(still carving)
Yeah. We do.

JESS
I'll grab Lexy.

Jess walks back toward the stairs...

INT. BASEMENT STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

...then up them and into the

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jess walks through and stops to pop open the fridge.

Inside, a bunch of food and beverage items with labels on them to indicate what belongs to whom and several bags of garlic cloves.

She closes the door, then walks back to the

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jess passes by Chloe, who doesn't acknowledge her, but it doesn't stop Jess from shooting Chloe a worrisome glance on her way by as she heads to the

INT. FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jess walks in, the TV blaring the day's news as Lexy sprawls out on a couch scrolling on her phone.

Lexy flips her phone screen around to show Jess a video of a trio of three thirtysomething white males in trucker hats, flannel and camouflage, sitting on a back porch talking at the camera.

LEXY

See. "It's not vampires, it's a government conspiracy."

Lexy spins the phone back around and exits out of the video.

JESS

He's not back yet.

LEXY

Seriously? Where's Chloe?

JESS

(pointing behind her)
Right over there.

Lexy follows the direction of Jess's pointing, sees Chloe sitting by the window.

LEXY

She looks rough.

JESS

You would too, all things
considered. Meet in the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY (NIGHT)

Jordan sits among his stakes and bourbon, methodically sharpening each wooden point. The pile of "finished" stakes has grown larger since we last saw him.

Jess descends the stairs, followed by Lexy. They find Jordan testing a stake's sharpness against his finger, drawing a bead of blood.

JORDAN
Sharp enough to go through bone?

He sucks the blood from his fingertip, eyes never leaving the stake.

JORDAN
Through muscle?

JESS
Jordan.

He looks up. His eyes are slightly glazed from the bourbon.

JORDAN
He's been gone ten hours.

JESS
The storm--

JORDAN
Twenty-minute drive. Even walking.

Jordan stands, unsteady. He picks up another stake, starts sharpening with more aggressive strokes.

JORDAN
Something happened to him out there.

Lexy clutches her phone, scrolling through posts about "turned" individuals. Her thumb hovers over a particularly disturbing video.

LEXY
What if he's just lost? What if his phone died and--

She stops scrolling. Stares at the screen.

LEXY
Jesus.

JESS

What?

LEXY

This guy in Phoenix. Came home
after being missing for hours. Wife
said he seemed normal at first,
but...

She turns the phone toward them. On screen: a news report
about a domestic violence incident.

JORDAN

But what?

LEXY

She's in the ICU.

The scraping sound of Jordan's sharpening fills the silence.
Louder now. More urgent.

JESS

That doesn't mean--

JORDAN

Doesn't mean what?

Jess moves toward the stairs.

JESS

I'm going to wait by the door.

Jordan drops his stake. It clatters on the concrete.

JORDAN

The hell you are.

JESS

If he comes back hurt--

JORDAN

If he comes back wrong.

Jordan picks up the stake, points it at Jess.

JORDAN

You're not opening that door.

LEXY

(still reading)
"Subject retained all memories,
personality traits, speech
patterns.

(MORE)

LEXY (CONT'D)
Only behavioral indicator was
increased aggression toward family
members."

She looks up at Jordan pointing the stake at Jess.

LEXY
Increased aggression.

Jordan follows her gaze to his own hand. Slowly lowers the
stake.

JESS
We need to go upstairs. Get Chloe.

JORDAN
She's too emotional.

JESS
She gets a vote.

JORDAN
She gets a say. Big difference.

Jess starts up the stairs.

JORDAN
He was my friend before he was her
boyfriend.

JESS
(turning back)
Was?

The word hangs in the air.

JORDAN
Is. He IS my friend.

But his hand moves back to the stake.

JORDAN
Which is why I'll do what needs to
be done.

Lexy pockets her phone, picks up a stake of her own.

LEXY
And if you're wrong?

JORDAN
Then we apologize.

LEXY

And if you're right?

Jordan doesn't answer. Just returns to sharpening his stake, the scraping now violent, desperate.

The sound echoes off the basement walls as all three of them stand there, weapons in hand, friendship dissolving into survival instinct.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (NIGHT)

Chloe's fingers fidget as she clicks out of the clock app -- now at less than five minutes -- and clicks open a text message thread with Trey.

The last couple are messages from Chloe to Trey, asking him how much longer, sent as green text messages on her iPhone.

Trey's last response -- *I'm fine. I'll be back soon!* -- came at 10:45 AM, more than an hour ago.

Chloe nervously composes another text -- *Seriously you need to hurry* -- then sits and stares at the screen for a couple beats, then looks out the window, back to her phone, then to the pill bottle next to her.

She picks it up and is about to pop another pill when--

JESS (O.S.)

Chloe.

Jess, Jordan, and Lexy all enter the room and surround Chloe. She puts down the pill bottle and looks up at the group with somber, confused eyes.

CHLOE

What?

JESS

Are you okay?

CHLOE

What do you think?

LEXY

How many pills have you taken?

CHLOE

What do you care?

LEXY

I care, okay?

Chloe rolls her eyes, slightly, then sighs and shoots Lexy a yeah, whatever glance that reeks of doubt.

JESS

We can talk about the pills later.
We need to talk about Trey.

CHLOE

He said he'd be back soon.

JESS

That was an hour ago.

CHLOE

There's still time.

Jess prods Jordan with her eyes to take the lead.

JORDAN

Look, Clo, we don't know what to do. Jess thinks we should let him in, I think we shouldn't, and Lexy's on the fence.

CHLOE

You took a vote?

JORDAN

Well...yeah. We all live here. We all have equal say in what goes on here. I thought we agreed to that?

CHLOE

That was before.

JORDAN

I know, but things have changed. So we need to know where your head's at. Are you clear right now?

CHLOE

Why would I not be clear?

Jordan glances down at the pill bottle.

CHLOE

Fuck you, man. I'm not some pill popping junkie. I have anxiety right now. Is that okay?

Jess sits down next to Chloe, puts her arm around her.

JESS

Of course it's okay. But we have a serious decision to make and not much time to make it in.

Chloe brings her hands to her face. She quietly sobs to herself, then sniffles out loud. Jess embraces her with a hug, kisses her on her forehead.

JESS

Hey, whatever happens, you're going to be fine. You're safe in here with us.

Chloe wipes her eyes.

CHLOE

I know, it's just...why did it have to be him? It could have been anyone else.

LEXY

Um, excuse me. What the fuck does that mean?

JESS

Lexy, she didn't mean--

LEXY

No, I want to know why this bitch is talking this kind of shit right now. You wish it was one of us out there getting turned into a fucking vampire?

CHLOE

You don't even believe half this shit, so what do you care?

JORDAN

Okay, can we just calm--

LEXY

No, no, no. I want to know why she's saying she wishes it was someone else.

JESS

Lex, calm down. She didn't mean it. It's just something people say.

LEXY

No, people say shit like hey girl nice bangs, or send me some vids from the shower, not shit like I wish it was you.

Lexy grabs a stake from the crate Jordan brought up and points it in Chloe's direction.

LEXY

Maybe I should go outside. Maybe I should take my chances with the vampires instead of staying in here with someone who wishes I was dead.

JESS

Put the stake down, Lexy.

LEXY

Why? We're all gonna end up using these anyway, right?

JESS

Put it down.

Lexy lowers the stake but doesn't put it away.

JESS

We have ninety seconds left. We can kill each other later.

Jordan sits down on the other side of Chloe.

JORDAN

You remember that time we got Thai food and you didn't know what you wanted, so you ordered two dishes? This is kind of like that. But instead of choosing both you can only choose one.

CHLOE

That doesn't make any sense.

JORDAN

You get my point, though. It's about making a choice and--

CHLOE

Shut up. Please.

Chloe looks down at her phone, then out the window, then back to the group. She contemplates the situation for a beat.

CHLOE

Trey told me before he left not to
let him in if it came down to it.

Lexy looks happy. Jordan does too. Jess forces a smile. Chloe quickly studies their reactions.

JESS

You're sure?

CHLOE

No. But we have to decide.

Another heavy silence falls over the room as the clock ticks down from 45 seconds as the music envelops the scene. Jordan leaves the room and heads toward the kitchen.

40 seconds --

Chloe stares blankly down at her phone screen.

35 seconds --

Lexy runs her fingers across the tip of her stake.

30 seconds --

Jess stares out the window, places her arm back around Chloe.

25 seconds --

Chloe continues to stare down at the timer on the phone.

20 seconds --

Jordan returns to the room with the crate of stakes and a backpack, thumps them down on the floor, much to the chagrin of Jess.

15 seconds --

10 seconds --

5 seconds -- 4 -- 3 -- 2 -- 1 -- and the clock hits zero without sign of Trey.

Chloe starts to sob again, heavier, then buries her head into Jess's shoulder. Jess feigns support for her friend.

Lexy stops looking at her stake to stare at her friends. The realization suddenly hits Jordan. He looks down at the floor.

Chloe's sobbing drowns out the scene for a few more beats until--

JORDAN
I'm going out.

Jordan packs three stakes in his backpack.

JESS
You're not leaving the house.

JORDAN
(continuing to pack the
stakes)
Someone has to get food for us.
Unless you wanna go all Walking
Dead and just eat each other.

LEXY
That's cannibalism, bro. Not zombie
shit.

Jess gets up and walks to the door, physically puts herself
between Jordan and the door.

JESS
We're drawing straws. It's the only
fair way to do it.

JORDAN
A game of chance is not a fair way
to do anything. I'm going out. It
makes the most sense.

LEXY
Oh, so you get to make decisions
for all of us now?

JORDAN
I'm trying to be responsible and
protect you because you're too
scared to go outside.

LEXY
Scared? Who built all these
barricades?

JORDAN
I built them because you all wanted
me to, remember?

JESS
Guys, let's just relax. Maybe we
should give him more time.

JORDAN
How much?

JESS

I don't know. Another hour?

LEXY

And then what? Two more? Three more? When do we accept that he's not coming back?

Chloe, still lightly sobbing, wipes her eyes and nose with her sleeve, then looks up at the group.

CHLOE

Jordan's right. He should be the one to go.

JESS

Clo, we all agreed on the process.

CHLOE

No one agreed on anything. And things have changed. One of us is out there and in trouble.

JESS

We don't know that.

CHLOE

We have to assume. And if he comes across Trey, he'll be able to tell if he's...not himself. Right?

Chloe and Jordan lock eyes. He nods slightly.

LEXY

Haven't y'all seen any vampire movies? 'Cause you're talking like you haven't, and I'm more offended by that than anything else. You can never tell a vampire from a human. Never. That's the point. They have that glamor magic shit going on where they just lure you into some fucked-up little love trance and then cuck! You're Dracula's daughter.

JESS

This isn't True Blood.

LEXY

Like hell it isn't! We got wooden stakes, barricades on the door, garlic in the fridge.

(MORE)

LEXY (CONT'D)

I still have questions about all of it, but judging by our reactions this is the truest fucking blood any of us has ever seen.

Jordan reaches into his backpack and pulls out a necklace made of garlic cloves. He puts it on.

JESS

What are you doing?

JORDAN

I'm leaving. Unless you--

JESS

What if the same thing that happened to Trey happens to you?

JORDAN

Then at least we'll know.

JESS

Know what?

JORDAN

What we're really dealing with.

JESS

What if he's not turned? What if he's just...hurt?

CHLOE

Then Jordan will help him.

JORDAN

(pulling out another
garlic necklace)

I'll find him. One way or another.

He puts the necklace on and shoulders his backpack. Thunder rumbles outside.

LEXY

(looking at her phone)

Weather alert. Severe thunderstorm warning.

JORDAN

Yeah, no shit. I don't need an app to see that.

JESS

You can't go out in this.

JORDAN
I'm not waiting for perfect weather.

CHLOE
What if he's stuck in the storm and trying to get back?

JORDAN
(at the door)
I'm going. Storm or no storm.

JESS
Jordan, please...

The storm intensifies outside. Rain pounds against the barricaded windows. Lightning flashes, briefly illuminating the empty street.

JORDAN
He could be out there. Hurt.
Waiting for help.

CHLOE
(looking out window)
I don't see him. I don't see anyone.

Another lightning flash. Still nothing.

JESS
Maybe you should wait until this storm is over.

LEXY
(checking her phone)
Storm's supposed to last all night.

CHLOE
(breaking down again)
All night? He could be dying out there!

JORDAN
That's why I need to go. Now.

JESS
(firmly blocking the door)
No. No one else is leaving this house right now.

JORDAN
Jess--

JESS

No! We've already lost one person.
I'm not losing another.

CHLOE

(sobbing)

What if he never comes back? What
if we never see him again?

Thunder crashes overhead. The lights flicker.

JESS

Perfect. As if this couldn't get
any worse.

JORDAN

(reluctantly setting down
his backpack)

Fine. We'll wait.

CHLOE

(wiping her eyes)

And if he's still not back by then?

JORDAN

Then I'll go looking for him.

The weight of that statement hangs in the air as the storm
rages outside.

SIX HOURS LATER...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (NIGHT)

The storm continues outside. The group has spread out around
the room, each trying to occupy themselves. The atmosphere is
thick with unspoken tension.

Chloe sits by the window, still staring out through the gap
in the barricade. Her pill bottle sits open next to her.

Jess flips through a magazine, but her eyes keep darting to
the others.

Jordan sits at the kitchen table, methodically sharpening
stakes with a small knife. The scraping sound fills the
silence.

Lexy scrolls through her phone, occasionally showing the
screen to no one in particular.

LEXY

"Day 13 update: Reports of strange behavior increasing in residential areas. Neighbors turning on neighbors."

JESS

Maybe put the phone down for a bit?

LEXY

Why?

JESS

I want us to stay calm.

LEXY

(still scrolling)

This lady in Phoenix says her husband came home from the grocery store and tried to bite her. Filed a police report and everything.

JORDAN

(not looking up from sharpening)

People do crazy shit when they're scared.

LEXY

Or when they're turned.

Jordan's knife slips slightly. He examines his finger -- no cut, but the near-miss makes him more agitated.

CHLOE

(without turning from window)

What if he can't find shelter? What if he's just standing out there in the rain, getting...exposed?

JORDAN

He's smarter than that.

CHLOE

Is he? 'Cause going out in the first place wasn't exactly genius-level thinking.

Jordan stops sharpening, looks up at Chloe.

JORDAN

Someone had to go. We were running out of food.

CHLOE
We had pizza last night.

JORDAN
One meal, Chloe. We can't live on
overpriced pizza forever.

LEXY
Speaking of which, when's the last
time any of you actually ate today?

Silence. Nobody can remember.

JESS
There's still some pasta in the
kitchen.

LEXY
I'm not hungry.

JORDAN
Neither am I.

CHLOE
I couldn't keep anything down right
now.

JESS
We should eat something. Keep our
strength up.

LEXY
For what?

JESS
For...I don't know. In case we need
it.

LEXY
In case of what, specifically?

Jess doesn't have an answer. She closes the magazine.

JESS
Jordan, you're making me nervous
with that thing.

JORDAN
These stakes need to be sharp.

JESS
They look plenty sharp.

JORDAN
(testing the point)
Sharp enough to go through bone?
Through muscle? I don't think so.

CHLOE
Jesus, Jordan.

JORDAN
What? We're preparing for the worst-
case scenario, right? That means
being realistic about what we might
have to do.

LEXY
(putting phone down)
Okay, can we talk about something
else?

JESS
Like what?

LEXY
Anything. Movies. Music. Normal
shit.

JORDAN
Nothing's normal anymore.

Jordan goes back to sharpening with more force. The scraping
sound is louder now, more aggressive.

CHLOE
I keep thinking I see movement out
there.

JESS
What kind of movement?

CHLOE
Shadows. Shapes. Probably just the
wind moving tree branches, but...

LEXY
But what?

CHLOE
Sometimes it looks like people.

JORDAN
Where?

CHLOE
Across the street. By the
Hendersons' house.

Jordan gets up, walks to the window, peers out through
another gap.

JORDAN
I don't see anything.

CHLOE
It was there a minute ago.

JORDAN
(studying her)
Are you sure?

CHLOE
What do you mean, am I sure?

JORDAN
I mean, you've been taking those
pills all day. They can make you
see things.

CHLOE
They're for anxiety, not
hallucinations.

JORDAN
How many have you taken today?

CHLOE
The normal amount.

LEXY
What's the normal amount?

CHLOE
Why is everyone suddenly so
interested in my medication?

JESS
We're just worried about you.

CHLOE
I'm fine.

JORDAN
Are you? Because you look like you
haven't slept in days.

CHLOE
Have any of us slept in days?

She has a point. Everyone looks exhausted.

LEXY

(back on phone)

This is interesting. Article about
sleep deprivation and paranoia.

JESS

Lexy.

LEXY

No, listen to this. "Prolonged
sleep deprivation can cause
hallucinations, increased anxiety,
and paranoid thoughts."

JORDAN

So we're all losing our minds.

LEXY

Maybe. Or maybe we're just tired
and making each other feel worse.

CHLOE

I saw something move. I'm not
paranoid.

JORDAN

Nobody's saying you are.

CHLOE

You literally just suggested I was
hallucinating.

JORDAN

I suggested the pills might be
affecting your perception.

CHLOE

Same thing.

JESS

Guys, can we please not turn on
each other?

LEXY

Too late for that.

Everyone looks at Lexy.

LEXY

What? We're stuck in here, bored and paranoid, and instead of supporting each other we're picking apart everything everyone says and does.

JORDAN

I'm not picking apart anything.

LEXY

Really? 'Cause you've been staring at Chloe like she's about to crack for the last hour.

JORDAN

I'm concerned about her mental health. Because of Trey.

CHLOE

My mental health is fine.

JORDAN

You're seeing things that aren't there, Clo.

CHLOE

Fuck you, Jordan.

JESS

Okay, everyone just--

LEXY

No, let them fight. At least it's honest.

JORDAN

(to Chloe)

You want honesty? I think you're having a breakdown and you're going to get us all killed.

CHLOE

(standing up)

Excuse me?

JORDAN

If Trey comes back and you can't handle making the right decision because you're too drugged up or emotional--

CHLOE
The right decision? You mean
murdering my boyfriend?

JORDAN
He's not your boyfriend anymore!

CHLOE
We don't know that!

Chloe lunges toward Jordan. Jess quickly gets between them.

JESS
Stop! Both of you, stop!

LEXY
This is exactly what I'm talking
about.

JESS
You're not helping.

LEXY
I'm observing. We're turning into
animals. Some of us anyway.

JORDAN
Maybe that's what this is all
about. Maybe the darkness doesn't
turn you into a vampire. Maybe it
just strips away all the bullshit
and shows you who you really are.

CHLOE
And who am I, Jordan? Since you
seem to have me all figured out.

JORDAN
You're someone who puts her own
feelings above everyone else's
safety.

CHLOE
Are you kidding me right now?

JORDAN
When's the last time you cleaned
the kitchen? Or helped with the
barricades? Or did anything except
sit by that window feeling sorry
for yourself?

JESS
Jordan, that's enough.

JORDAN

I'm the one making sure we can defend ourselves. I'm the one who wanted to go get supplies. I'm the one trying to keep us alive while she's over there getting high and seeing things.

Chloe picks up her pill bottle and throws it at Jordan. It hits him in the chest, pills scattering across the floor.

CHLOE

There! Happy now?

JORDAN

(picking up pills)
Jesus Christ, Chloe. These are prescription strength. How many--

CHLOE

Count them if you want to know so bad.

Jordan starts counting the pills on the floor.

JORDAN

There's only like eight left.

CHLOE

I've been stressed.

JESS

Chloe, honey, that's dangerous.

CHLOE

Everything's dangerous now. What's the difference?

JORDAN

The difference is we need you clear-headed.

CHLOE

For what? So I can help you murder Trey when he gets back?

JORDAN

So you can help us stay alive.

Thunder crashes outside, closer than before. The lights flicker more dramatically.

LEXY

Power's getting worse.

JORDAN
(still holding pills)
We need to talk about this.

CHLOE
We just did.

JORDAN
No, we need to figure out what to do if you're too messed up to make rational decisions.

CHLOE
I'm making perfectly rational decisions.

LEXY
Are you? Because from where I'm sitting, you just threw your medication across the room like a toddler having a tantrum.

CHLOE
What's your excuse? You sit there scrolling through conspiracy theories all day like it's entertainment.

LEXY
It's information.

CHLOE
It's fear porn. You're addicted to being scared.

LEXY
At least I'm not addicted to pills.

JESS
Everyone stop. Please.

But nobody's listening to Jess anymore.

JORDAN
(to Lexy)
She's right about the phone. You're making everyone more paranoid with that shit.

LEXY
I'm keeping us informed.

JORDAN
You're keeping us terrified.

LEXY

Good. We should be terrified. Of vampires or maybe whatever else is actually happening.

CHLOE

See? She wants us to be scared.

LEXY

I want us to be realistic.

JORDAN

Realistic about what? Half the stuff you read is probably fake anyway.

LEXY

Oh, so now I'm the problem too?

JORDAN

I didn't say that.

LEXY

You're saying I'm spreading bullshit.

JORDAN

I'm saying maybe we don't need a play-by-play of every horrible thing happening out there, or every short-sighted theory about it.

LEXY

And I'm saying maybe we need to consider all options, because none of this seems fucking natural.

The tip of a stake slowly makes its way into frame and touches Lexy's throat. Jess holds the other end.

LEXY

What are you doing?

JESS

I'm shutting you up. Can you be cool for a minute, senorita?

LEXY

I can be cool. Can you?

JESS

I'm a witch's tit.

Jess lowers the stake.

JESS

Look at what we're doing to each other. We're being cruel.

Everyone stares at Jess, realizing she just held a weapon to Lexy's throat.

The room goes silent. The weight of what just happened sinks in.

LEXY

(standing up, backing away)

You know what? Fuck this. Fuck all of you.

She grabs her phone and heads toward the family room.

JORDAN

(standing, gathering his stakes and bourbon)

Yeah, I'm done with this shit too.

He walks toward the basement stairs.

CHLOE

(getting up, clutching her remaining pills)

I need to call my mom.

She heads upstairs.

Jess sits alone in the living room, surrounded by the remnants of their group unity - empty pizza boxes, scattered pills, the stake still in her hands.

She looks around at the empty room, then quietly gets up and walks toward the kitchen.

BEGIN MONTAGE SEQUENCE - INDIVIDUAL SPIRALS

The house settles into uneasy quiet, broken only by sounds from different rooms:

INT. CHLOE AND TREY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chloe sits on the bed, phone in hand. Multiple missed calls to Trey show on her screen. She dials again.

CHLOE

Hey, it's me again. Just...call me when you get this, okay? I'm worried.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jordan sits among his stakes and bourbon. The pile of "finished" stakes has grown significantly.

He tests a point against his finger - draws blood. Nods with satisfaction.

He takes a swig of bourbon, sets up a makeshift target across the room.

Jordan throws a stake at the target. It penetrates deeply. He retrieves it, examines the hole it made. Better. Sharper.

INT. CHLOE AND TREY'S BEDROOM - LATER

REGINA

Any word from Trey?

CHLOE

Nothing. His phone goes straight to voicemail.

REGINA

Maybe his battery died.

CHLOE

Maybe.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lexy sprawls across the couch, phone glowing. Multiple browser tabs, screenshots, notes scattered around her.

Her thumb scrolls rapidly. She highlights passages, makes connections between different posts.

On screen: "Temperature variation irrelevant... mirrors unreliable... only consistent sign is behavioral change."

She opens her notebook, writes:

- Denial of obvious threats
- Increased aggression toward group members

- Rationalization of dangerous behavior

She looks toward the kitchen where Jess is organizing, then back at her notes. Underlines "Increased aggression."

INT. CHLOE AND TREY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Regina looks more agitated now.

REGINA

I keep thinking I hear Trey's car
in the driveway. But when I look
outside, there's nothing there.

CHLOE

Mom, stop. You're spiraling.

REGINA

(pausing)

Spiraling. That's a good word for
it. I'm spiraling.

Something in her tone makes Chloe sit up straighter.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jess arranges supplies in precise patterns. Her handwriting
is controlled, but her hands shake.

She opens cabinet after cabinet:

Two cans soup... one box crackers... half jar peanut
butter...

She erases something, rewrites it.

Jess holds up a small mirror, examines her reflection.

Crushes a garlic clove, smells it. Touches her cross
necklace. All normal. But her hands won't stop shaking.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. CHLOE AND TREY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Chloe holds up a small mirror, examines her reflection from
different angles. Her phone RINGS. FaceTime from Mom again.
She answers immediately.

CHLOE

Mom! Thank God. Are you--

She stops. Something's wrong.

Regina appears on screen, but she's very still. Sitting unnaturally straight, staring directly into the camera without blinking.

CHLOE
Are you feeling alright?

REGINA
I feel...clear.

Regina's voice is different - flatter, more controlled. Behind her, the kitchen looks wrong. Dark stains on the walls that weren't there before.

CHLOE
Clear about what?

REGINA
(leaning closer to camera)
About what happened to Trey.

Chloe notices Regina's pupils are completely dilated. Black.

CHLOE
What...what happened to him?

In the background of Regina's screen, there's movement. Someone else is there.

CHLOE
Mom, who's there with you?

Regina doesn't break eye contact with the camera, but her smile widens, showing teeth that seem different. Sharper.

REGINA
Just a neighbor. She came by to
check on me.

A woman's voice off-camera, distressed and muffled:

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)
(terrified, gagged)
Please...someone help me...

CHLOE
(standing up)
Mom, what's going on? What are you
doing?

Regina finally breaks eye contact, looks toward something off-camera with predatory interest.

REGINA
(to the neighbor)
Shh. We're talking to my daughter.

The camera shakes as Regina gets up. Through the tilted phone, Chloe catches a glimpse of an elderly woman tied to a chair, tape over her mouth, eyes wide with terror.

CHLOE
What the...Mom, what--

Regina's face reappears on camera, but now there's something dark around her mouth. She wipes it away casually.

REGINA
Now, about Trey...

She licks her lips.

REGINA
When he comes back -- and he will
come back -- you need to let him
in, Chloe.

CHLOE
This isn't real. This isn't
happening.

Regina leans so close to the camera that her face fills the entire screen. Her eyes are completely black now.

REGINA
He'll be so hungry when he gets
home.

The neighbor's muffled screaming suddenly stops. Complete silence from Regina's end.

CHLOE
(sobbing)
Mom, stop!

REGINA
(whispering)
It's so much better than the pills,
baby.

Regina's face is inches from her camera now, her black eyes reflecting the screen's light.

REGINA
Trust me.

The connection suddenly cuts out. Screen goes black.

Chloe stares at her phone in horror, shaking. She immediately reaches for her pill bottle, swallows three pills at once.

The silence in her room is deafening.

JESS (O.S.)
Chloe? You okay up there?

But she can't respond. Can't move. Can't process what she just witnessed.

JESS (O.S.)
Chloe?

Footsteps approaching. Jess appears in the doorway.

JESS
What happened? What's wrong?

CHLOE
(barely audible)
My mom...she...

JESS
She what?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The group reconvenes in the living room. Everyone looks worse -- Jordan drunk and aggressive, Lexy wired and paranoid, Jess obsessively organized.

Chloe looks up at them, tears streaming, pupils dilated from shock and pills.

CHLOE
I think she killed someone.

JORDAN
(slurring slightly)
Wait, what? Say that again.

CHLOE
I think my mom just killed someone
on FaceTime.

LEXY
(pulling out her phone)
We need to call the police.

CHLOE
And tell them what?

JESS
If your mom...and if Trey was
supposed to go there...

The implication hangs in the air.

CHLOE
No. She said he never showed up.

JORDAN
Are you sure that's what she said?

CHLOE
I...yes. She said he never came by.

LEXY
But would she tell you if he had?
If something happened to him there?

Thunder crashes outside, closer than before. The lights
flicker dramatically.

CHLOE
I have to go find him.

JORDAN
What? Why?

CHLOE
Someone has to look for Trey. And I
need to check on my mom.

JESS
In this storm? With everything you
just told us?

CHLOE
Especially because of what I just
told you.

She starts putting on her jacket.

JORDAN
(moving to block the door)
I'm not letting you leave.

CHLOE
You're not letting me?

JORDAN
That's right.

CHLOE

Who made you the boss, Jordan? I didn't vote for you.

LEXY

This is exactly what they want. For us to separate. Pick us off one by one.

CHLOE

Then I'll die trying to help the people I love instead of sitting here getting drunk and paranoid!

JORDAN

You're high!

CHLOE

I'm thinking straighter than I have in weeks!

The argument escalates. Chloe fights to get to the door. Jordan and the others try to stop her.

In the chaos, furniture gets knocked over, stakes scatter across the floor.

CHLOE

(screaming while
struggling)

LET ME GO! THEY NEED ME!

Thunder crashes overhead. The lights flicker violently.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Desperate banging on the door cuts through everything. Everyone freezes.

TREY (O.S.)

Let me in! Guys! Let me in now!

Chloe stops struggling immediately, staring at the door in shock and relief.

CHLOE

Trey.

TREY (O.S.)

Guys! Please! Something's wrong with my car! I'm bleeding!

CHLOE
(trying to break free from
Jordan's grip)
See? SEE? He's hurt! He needs help!

JORDAN
(gripping a stake)
But why now? Why show up right when
we're fighting?

LEXY
Like he was waiting for us to be
divided.

CHLOE
Or like he's been trying to get
home for eight hours!

TREY (O.S.)
I can hear you in there! Please!
I'm bleeding!

Chloe looks at her friends -- Jordan drunk and aggressive,
Lexy clutching her phone, Jess with her testing materials,
all of them suspicious.

Thunder rumbles outside again and then --

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

TREY (O.S.)
Guys! Open the fucking door!

Chloe grabs for the door, but Jordan catches her arm roughly.

JORDAN
Wait. We don't know if that's
really him.

LEXY
(checking her phone)
No missed calls. No texts. If he's
been trying to get back, why didn't
he contact us?

TREY (O.S.)
My phone died hours ago!

JESS
(moving toward the door)
We need to test him.

JORDAN
Trey! You're ten hours late!

TREY (O.S.)
I know! I'm sorry!

A pause. Through the barricade gaps, they can see him hunched over, clearly in pain.

CHLOE
What happened? Are you okay?

TREY (O.S.)
I got the prescription! I went to
your mom's house, but...

He trails off. Lightning flashes, illuminating his bloodied silhouette.

JORDAN
But what?

TREY (O.S.)
She wasn't there! House was dark,
door was open, but nobody home!

CHLOE
What do you mean she wasn't there?

TREY (O.S.)
I waited! Called her phone,
nothing!

He leans heavily against the door, breathing hard.

TREY (O.S.)
I left the pills on her kitchen
counter!

Lightning flashes again. They can see him supporting himself against the door frame, clearly injured.

CHLOE
Walking from where?

TREY (O.S.)
Willowbrook! Your mom's
neighborhood!

JESS
That's only twenty minutes by car.

TREY (O.S.)
My car broke down! I've been
walking for hours!

His voice is hoarse, exhausted. Through the gaps, they can
see him shivering violently.

TREY (O.S.)
Streets are flooded, power lines
down! I got lost!

JORDAN
(swaying slightly)
Trey, we need you to stay calm and
answer some questions.

TREY (O.S.)
Questions? Bro, are you drunk?

JORDAN
You tell me!

JESS
We just need to make sure you're
okay, Trey.

TREY (O.S.)
I'm not okay! But I ain't no
fucking vampire, either!

JORDAN
We need to be sure!

Silence from outside. Just the sound of rain and wind. They
can see his silhouette slumped against the door.

TREY (O.S.)
Are you serious right now?

LEXY
(reading from phone)
"Infected individuals often display
confusion about missing time and
defensive behavior when
questioned."

TREY (O.S.)
What the hell?!

JESS
(pulling out thermometer)
Trey, just work with us. Please.

TREY (O.S.)
Work with you on what?!

She slides the thermometer through the door gap.

TREY (O.S.)
Y'all are insane.

CHLOE
Babe, my mom...

TREY (O.S.)
What about her?

CHLOE
She said you never came by. But you
just said you did.

TREY (O.S.)
I went to her house! I swear! She
wasn't there!

CHLOE
So where was she?

TREY (O.S.)
How the hell should I know?!

A pause. Thermometer beeps. He slides it back.

TREY (O.S.)
Happy?

JESS
That's high. And he just said he
was cold.

TREY (O.S.)
I've been running through a storm!

Jess slides garlic through the gap.

JESS
Smell this.

TREY (O.S.)
It smells like garlic!

JESS
Any burning? Nausea?

Trey picks up the garlic clove, brings it close to his nose.
Takes a deliberate sniff. No reaction.

He holds it up for them to see through the gap.

TREY (O.S.)
See? Nothing.

Chloe appears at the door, pushes past Jordan and Jess.

CHLOE
This is ridiculous.

She starts to unlatch the chain, but Jordan catches her wrist.

JORDAN
Wait.

He slides a small crucifix through the gap.

JORDAN
Touch this.

He holds it in his palm, shows them through the gap. No burning, no smoke, no reaction.

TREY (O.S.)
There. I touched it. Nothing happened. Praise Jesus. Can I please come in now?

Jordan holds up a mirror to Trey and looks at the reflection. Normal. He studies Trey's face through the gap, looking for something, anything different.

TREY
I'm still me, man.

JORDAN
What did you call me in third grade?

TREY (O.S.)
Marshmallow Head. Because of your hair.

Jordan's shoulders relax slightly. But his hand stays on the security chain.

JESS
What's our safe word for game night?

TREY (O.S.)
Pineapple. From when Lexy got too
drunk and started crying about her
ex.

Lexy appears behind the others, looking defensive.

LEXY
I wasn't that drunk.

TREY (O.S.)
You threw up in the Monopoly box.

LEXY
Coincidence.

Despite the tension, Chloe almost smiles. These are
definitely Trey's memories.

JORDAN
But you lied about Chloe's mom.

TREY (O.S.)
I didn't lie! I went there, she
wasn't home!

Lightning flashes again. Through the gaps, they can see him
more clearly -- bloodied, exhausted, clearly injured.

CHLOE
He's fine.

JORDAN
How can you be sure?

CHLOE
Because he's freezing his ass off
arguing with Lexy about vomit
instead of trying to charm his way
inside.

Trey looks directly at Jordan through the gap.

TREY
If I wasn't me, would I be standing
here letting you quiz me like a
vampire SAT test?

Jordan's hand hovers over the chain latch.

TREY
I could have broken this door down.
I could have tried to trick you.
(MORE)

TREY (CONT'D)
Instead I'm standing here in the
rain holding your Jesus jewelry
like an idiot.

Lightning flashes. Thunder crashes. Lights flicker more
severely, then

TOTAL BLACKOUT.

LEXY
Shit.

JESS
Everyone stay calm.

TREY (O.S.)
What happened?

CHLOE
The power went out.

LEXY
(checking phone)
Still have a signal.

JESS
(looking out window)
Street lights are out too.

JORDAN
(stumbling in darkness)
Where are the flashlights?

JESS
Kitchen drawer.

CHLOE
Trey! We're going to get some
light!

TREY (O.S.)
Hurry up!

LEXY
Convenient timing. Power goes out
right when we're questioning him.

JESS
It's the storm, Lexy. Look outside.

Through the windows, they can see the entire neighborhood is
dark. Lightning provides the only illumination.

Jordan returns with flashlights. The beams create moving shadows that make everyone look sinister.

CHLOE
How long until it comes back on?

JESS
In this situation? Could be days.

TREY (O.S.)
I'm getting soaked! Please! Can we figure this out inside?

Lightning flashes, briefly illuminating Trey's silhouette through the barricade -- he's collapsed against the door, clearly in pain.

JORDAN
Trey, I need you to be completely honest with us. What exactly happened at Chloe's mom's house?

TREY (O.S.)
I told you! She wasn't there!

JORDAN
Call her again.

Chloe dials. The call goes straight to--

CHLOE
Voicemail.

TREY (O.S.)
Maybe her power's out too.

LEXY
Or maybe she can't answer because something happened to her.

CHLOE
What's that supposed to mean?

LEXY
I'm just saying...if something happened to her...

TREY (O.S.)
Nothing happened to her! Her house was empty!

LEXY
Empty, or cleaned out?

TREY (O.S.)

What?

CHLOE

Did it look like she left
voluntarily, or like there was a
struggle?

TREY (O.S.)

I...I don't know. The door was
open. I called out, no one
answered, so I left the pills
inside.

CHLOE

And you didn't see anything
unusual?

TREY (O.S.)

Like what?

CHLOE

Blood. Signs of violence. Dark
stains.

TREY (O.S.)

Jesus, Clo. No.

CHLOE

But I watched her kill someone on
FaceTime tonight!

A beat of silence.

TREY (O.S.)

What?

CHLOE

I watched her attack our neighbor.
She...she wasn't human anymore.

TREY (O.S.)

Are you sure?

CHLOE

I'm sure.

JESS

Which is why we need to know
exactly what happened when you went
there.

TREY (O.S.)

I told you. The house was empty. If she did something to someone, it wasn't when I was there.

LEXY

But if Chloe's mom turned into one of them, and you were supposed to go there...

TREY (O.S.)

I didn't see her! The door was open, I called out, nobody answered!

JESS

So you just left the medication and left?

TREY (O.S.)

I put it on the counter and got the hell out of there!

CHLOE

See? He was being careful!

JORDAN

Or he's lying to cover up what really happened!

TREY (O.S.)

Cover up what? That I got attacked by Chloe's vampire mom?

JORDAN

Maybe!

TREY (O.S.)

Y'all have lost your fucking minds!

Thunder crashes overhead. The storm intensifies.

CHLOE

We can't leave him out there in this.

JORDAN

We can't let him in if he's compromised.

CHLOE

Compromised by what? Trying to help my mom?

She moves toward the door again. Jordan blocks her, but he's unsteady from the alcohol.

CHLOE
I'm letting him in.

JORDAN
(swaying)
Over my dead body.

CHLOE
If that's what it takes.

She pushes Jordan hard. He stumbles backward, crashes into a table, scattering mirrors and crosses.

JESS
Jordan!

Chloe quickly undoes the locks and pulls the door open.

Trey stumbles inside -- soaked, bloody, exhausted, shivering violently from cold and clearly human. No fangs, no glowing eyes, just a guy who's had a terrible night.

Chloe embraces him. He's freezing cold and shaking.

CHLOE
Oh my God, you're freezing.

TREY
I'm okay. I'm here. I'm okay.

Jordan gets to his feet, wiping blood from where he hit the table.

JORDAN
Fuck, that hurt!

Trey looks around at his friends -- Jordan drunk and bleeding, Lexy clutching her phone defensively, Jess gathering her scattered testing materials, all maintaining distance, all suspicious.

JESS
Where are the supplies?

TREY
What?

JESS
You went out for supplies. Where are they?

TREY

I had to leave them. After the car broke down. I couldn't carry everything in the storm.

LEXY

So all the stuff we need is still out there?

TREY

Yes. Look at this fucking storm. I barely made it back myself.

He looks around at their faces in the flashlight beams.

TREY

I'm sorry.

JORDAN

Someone needs to stay with you. Make sure you're...yourself.

CHLOE

I'll stay with him.

JESS

We all will. Nobody goes anywhere alone until we're sure.

TREY

The fuck is wrong with you? Can we please act normal for five minutes?

LEXY

Define normal.

TREY

Normal as in I want to take a shower and change my clothes and lie the fuck down without y'all hovering over me.

JORDAN

We just want to be sure, man.

TREY

Then get in the shower with me. You can be sure then.

JORDAN

C'mon. I like you but...not like that.

TREY

You sure were up my ass a lot for
someone who doesn't like me that
like that.

JORDAN

That's sick, bro.

TREY

Exactly. Y'all in sicko mode right
now...up here.

(pointing to his head)

I'm going upstairs to shower and
change and when I come back down
y'all better be calm and collected
so we can figure out what to do
next. Are we clear?

Everyone nods. But as he heads upstairs with Chloe, the
others remain in the dim living room, still holding their
weapons, still suspicious, still afraid.

INT. CHLOE AND TREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Trey sits on the edge of the bed, exhausted.

Chloe paces nervously.

CHLOE

I can't believe they did that to
you.

TREY

They're scared. Can't blame them
for that.

CHLOE

I can. You could have died out
there.

Trey looks at her -- really looks at her for the first time
since coming inside.

TREY

Babe, you look...

CHLOE

What?

TREY

Stressed.

CHLOE
Because I've been stressed.

TREY
Stressed or spiraling?

CHLOE
Don't psychoanalyze me right now.

TREY
I'm not. I'm worried about you.

He stands up, starts unbuttoning his soaked shirt.

TREY
Look, I know tonight was scary. But
we're together now. We're safe.

CHLOE
Are we? My mom killed someone,
Trey. I watched her do it.

TREY
You don't know that for sure.

CHLOE
I know what I saw.

Trey pulls his shirt off. Chloe's eyes immediately go to his
neck and shoulder area.

CHLOE
What's that?

TREY
What's what?

She moves closer, examining dark marks near his collarbone
and neck.

CHLOE
Those marks. On your neck.

Trey touches the area, looks down at his chest.

TREY
Scratches from walking through the
woods. Branches and shit.

CHLOE
They look like...

She trails off, staring at the marks. They're not neat scratches -- they're more like puncture wounds, small and dark.

TREY
Like what?

CHLOE
Show me your back.

TREY
What?

CHLOE
Turn around. Show me your back.

TREY
(sighing)
Fine.

He turns around. More scratches and marks across his shoulders and back -- some clearly from branches, but others...

CHLOE
Jesus Christ.

TREY
It's from the storm. I told you, I was walking through woods, climbing over fallen trees.

CHLOE
Some of those look deep.

She continues staring at his neck. The marks are small, paired, about an inch apart.

CHLOE
Are you lying to me?

TREY
I'm not lying. Look, let me shower, and when I come back down, we'll discuss this rationally.

CHLOE
Rationally? There's nothing rational about any of this!

TREY
There's nothing rational about you popping pills like candy either!

The words hang in the air. Trey immediately regrets them.

TREY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean--

CHLOE

Yes, you did.

TREY

I'm just tired, okay? I've had the worst night of my life.

CHLOE

So have I.

TREY

I know. But we're together now. Let me clean up and then we'll figure this out.

He moves toward the door, then turns around, and for a moment there's something different in his eyes. Not malevolent, just...exhausted frustration that looks almost dangerous.

TREY

I am not a vampire, okay? I was not attacked by your mother. I was not effected by whatever the news says I'd be effected by. I got scratched up walking through a storm. That's it. I promise.

Chloe stares at him, and in her pill-addled, sleep-deprived state, she's not sure what she's seeing. The Trey she knows? Or something wearing his face?

CHLOE

Okay.

TREY

Okay?

CHLOE

Okay. Go shower.

TREY

I love you.

She hesitates.

CHLOE

I love you too.

He disappears into the hallway.

Chloe sits on the bed, staring at the bathroom door, the nearly empty pill bottle in her hand.

She takes the last two pills.

She stands up, unsteady, and walks to the dresser mirror. Her reflection looks back -- pale, wide-eyed, pupils dilated.

CHLOE
He's lying to you.

Her reflection seems to nod in agreement.

CHLOE
Those weren't scratches.

She touches her own neck.

As she does, her reflection changes.

Her eyes completely black now.

CHLOE
He went to Mom's house. Mom killed
someone. Mom bit him.

REFLECTION
(speaking back)
He's changing.

CHLOE
He's dangerous.

REFLECTION
They need to know.

Chloe nods, turns away from the mirror, and walks toward the bedroom door.

But as she passes the mirror again, her reflection doesn't move with her -- it stays facing forward, smiling with fangs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Jordan paces with his bourbon bottle, clearly agitated. Lexy scrolls through her phone obsessively. Jess organizes and reorganizes her testing supplies.

LEXY
Listen to this: "Initial bite marks
often appear as simple scratches to
the infected person. Memory gaps
are common."

JORDAN
(slurring)
Memory gaps. That explains the
missing time.

JESS
We should have done more thorough
testing.

LEXY
We should have strip-searched him.

JORDAN
He's in the shower. We can check.

JESS
Okay, Jordan, that's weird.

JORDAN
So was the guy in Phoenix.

JESS
What? That doesn't make sense.

The shower continues running upstairs.

LEXY
How long has he been up there?

JESS
Ten minutes?

JORDAN
Long enough to wash off evidence.

JORDAN
When he comes down, we demand to
see his neck.

JESS
And if he refuses?

JORDAN
Then we know.

LEXY
Know what, exactly?

JORDAN
That he's not Trey anymore.

Chloe appears at the bottom of the staircase.

CHLOE
You guys you were right.

JESS
Right about what?

CHLOE
About Trey.

She walks into the room.

CHLOE
I saw them. Bite marks. On his
neck.

JORDAN
I fucking knew it!

LEXY
Are you sure?

CHLOE
Two puncture wounds. Right here.

She points to her own neck.

CHLOE
But...I also saw something else.

She looks at her hands, notices they're steadier than they've
been in weeks.

CHLOE
I saw myself.

She takes a deep breath, almost euphoric.

CHLOE
No more pills. No more panic
attacks. I finally feel...clear.

And then, right in front of them, Chloe begins to TURN.

Her spine curves unnaturally. Her fingers elongate. Her eyes
go completely black.

CHLOE
(voice distorting)
It tastes so much better than the
pills.

JORDAN
(raising stake)
Stay back!

CHLOE
(lunging forward)
Don't worry. It doesn't hurt.

Jordan swings the stake, but Chloe moves with inhuman speed, grabbing his wrist and twisting until he drops the weapon.

Jess and Lexy scatter! Jordan tries to follow, but Chloe's grip is too strong.

She leans close to his neck.

CHLOE
It makes everything taste better.

But as Chloe bites him, something else happens. Jordan's terror reaches a critical mass, and he begins to change too.

His eyes go black. His teeth sharpen.

CHLOE
(pulling back, giddy)
Oh. OH OH OH!

Jordan, now partially transformed, snarls and attacks Chloe.

They crash into the coffee table, splintering it. Jordan's newfound strength surprises even Chloe as he pins her down, snapping at her throat.

She grabs his head with both hands and twists violently. Jordan's neck snaps with a wet CRACK, but he doesn't die -- just goes limp for a moment.

JORDAN
(neck bent at wrong angle,
still talking)
What the fuck?!

Chloe grabs him by his broken neck and swings him like a ragdoll into the wall. His body hits with a sickening THUD, leaving a dent in the drywall and a spray of blood.

Jordan slides down the wall, his neck still twisted, trying to crawl away.

Jordan gurgles incoherently.

She grabs his ankles and starts dragging him across the floor, his fingernails scratching against the hardwood as he tries to grab onto anything.

She drags him to the basement door.

She lifts him up and hurls him down the stairs. His body tumbles, bones breaking with each impact --

CRACK, SNAP, THUD!

He lands at the bottom in a heap, still moving but barely.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jess and Lexy huddle underneath a POOL TABLE, staring in horror at Jordan's broken body writhing at the foot of the stairs.

Jordan's head turns toward them at an impossible angle, his black eyes focusing on them, his mouth gurgling speech that isn't even close to English.

Jess begins to gag.

LEXY
(grabbing stakes)
Don't look at him.

But Jess can't take her eyes off him. She stares right into his eyes, takes in the specifics of his discombobulated head, then turns and vomits all over Lexy -- first a normal-looking puke, then red, then PITCH BLACK!

Her eyes follow suit.

Lexy yelps in disgust and wipes the vomit from her face, then locks eyes with the newly turned Jess...

LEXY
(backing away)
Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit!

Lexy scrambles out from under the pool table, grabbing stakes as she goes.

Jess crawls after her, spider-like.

Jordan's broken body starts dragging itself toward them both, making inhuman clicking sounds.

Chloe appears at the top of the basement stairs, looking down at the chaos below.

CHLOE
Oh my! Looks like Jess caught the bug too! It really is contagious, isn't it?

LEXY
Help me! Please!

CHLOE
Of course, sweetie, of course!

Chloe slams the basement door shut with a loud BANG! The lock clicks from the other side.

Lexy looks around at her situation - Jordan dragging his broken body toward her from one side, Jess spider-crawling from the other, both making inhuman sounds.

She looks at the stakes in her hands, then at the locked door above her.

She drops to her knees and her eyes go completely black. Her spine curves, her fingers elongate into claws!

JESS
Yes! YES!

Lexy snarls hideously, then lunges at Jess with inhuman speed. They crash into the basement wall, clawing and biting at each other.

JORDAN
(clicking and gurgling)
Mine... mine... MINE!

He drags himself over and grabs Lexy's ankle, pulling her away from Jess. All three of them become a writhing mass of claws, teeth, and hunger.

JESS
(to Jordan)
She's not yours!

JORDAN
(snapping at Jess)
I was here first!

Lexy drives a stake through Jordan's shoulder, pinning him to the concrete floor. Black blood sprays from the wound!

JESS
(grabbing another stake)
My turn!

She drives a stake through Lexy's thigh. Lexy howls and backhands Jess across the face, sending her flying into the pool table.

Lexy pulls the stake from her leg!

She throws the bloody stake like a javelin. It embeds in Jess's stomach.

Jess looks down at the stake and laughs maniacally!

Jordan, still pinned to the floor, grabs Jess's ankle and bites down hard. Jess screams and kicks him in the face with her free foot.

He spits out pieces of her ankle flesh!

Lexy starts throwing stakes like darts. One catches Jordan in the eye, another in Jess's shoulder.

Jordan pulls the stake from his socket and drives it into Lexy's back as she lunges past him!

Jess crawls behind them and drives a stake through both of Jordan's ankles, crucifying him to the floor.

JORDAN

You control-freak bitch!

LEXY

(pulling the stake from
her back)

You were always too organized for
your own good! No spontaneity!

Lexy and Jordan both turn on Jess. Jordan, despite being pinned, lunges his upper body forward and grabs Jess's ankle.

JESS

Wait! We can work together! I have
a plan!

LEXY AND JORDAN

(in unison)

Fuck your plans!

Lexy drives a stake through Jess's chest while Jordan, stretching from his pinned position, manages to drive another stake through her neck. Jess gurgles and collapses.

But as she falls, her weight lands on the stakes pinning Jordan's ankles. The wooden stakes SNAP under the impact, freeing his legs.

He pulls his bloody ankles free from the broken stakes and struggles to his feet, wobbly but mobile again.

He grabs Lexy's wrist as she tries to stake him again!

He headbutts her with the stake still protruding from his eye socket. The wooden point drives through her forehead.

But instead of falling back, Lexy's body lurches forward. Her blood, thick and black, begins to flow INTO Jordan through the connecting stake.

LEXY

(stake through her head,
voice dreamy)

Oh... oh fuck... I can taste your
thoughts...

JORDAN

What the fu--

His eye socket begins to stretch and expand around the stake, flesh reaching toward Lexy's forehead wound like hungry fingers.

Jess gurgles through her neck wounds! She tries to crawl away, but her chest wound is pulling her toward Jordan's outstretched hand. Black tendrils of flesh stretch between them like taffy.

LEXY/JORDAN

(speaking in unison)

Need...more...

Jess's body gets dragged across the concrete as the flesh tendrils reel her in. Her stake wounds begin to widen, opening like mouths.

Jordan's elongated arm pushes into her chest wound. The three bodies begin to merge, flesh flowing together like melting wax!

LEXY

(her voice coming from
Jordan's mouth)

I taste everything you were afraid
of, Jess. Your need to organize, to
control...

JORDAN

(his voice coming from
Lexy's throat)

And you, Lexy. Always scrolling,
always consuming information...

JESS

(her voice coming from
both of them)

I have...a plan.

The three bodies twist and writhe together, bones cracking and reforming.

Jordan's broken neck stretches like rubber, allowing his head to rotate 360 degrees.

Lexy's limbs elongate and wrap around the others like tentacles.

Jess's torso opens up like a flower, revealing rows of teeth where her ribs should be.

THE MERGED THING
(speaking with all three
voices at once)
It... tastes... so... good...

Arms and legs protrude from impossible angles. Multiple faces push through the surface of the flesh mass -- sometimes Jordan's, sometimes Lexy's, sometimes Jess's -- appearing and disappearing like drowning victims.

JORDAN'S FACE
(emerging from the mass)
I can taste your paranoia, Lexy...

LEXY'S FACE
(appearing on the opposite
side)
I can taste your anger, Jordan...

JESS'S FACE
(stretching out from the
center)
I can taste both of your chaos...
it's so disorganized...

The thing pulses and writhes, getting larger as it consumes itself in an endless loop.

Stakes protrude from various points, but they've become part of the organism now, like spines or quills.

THE MERGED THING
(all voices harmonizing)
We... are... what... we... fear...

The voices trail off into wet, sucking sounds as the mass settles into a rhythmic pulsing, like a giant heart made of human flesh.

Occasionally, a hand will emerge from the surface and wave, or an eye will open and look around, or a mouth will appear and whisper fragments of conversations from earlier.

LEXY'S VOICE
 (faintly, from within the
 mass)
 Best... game night... ever...

The basement falls silent except for the wet, rhythmic pulsing and the occasional muffled voice from within the flesh-thing.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The shower turns off. Steam fills the small bathroom as Trey steps out, grabbing a towel. He looks refreshed.

He towels off, examining the scratches on his neck and shoulders in the mirror. They look like normal cuts -- nothing sinister about them.

INT. CHLOE AND TREY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Trey puts on fresh clothes. The house seems quiet -- no arguing, no panicked voices.

 TREY
 (calling out)
 Chloe?

No immediate response, but he can hear movement in the kitchen.

 TREY
 (louder)
 Babe?

 CHLOE (O.S.)
 (from downstairs, sounding
 normal)
 I'm in the kitchen! Just...
 preparing dinner!

He finishes getting dressed and heads for the bedroom door.

INT. STAIRWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Trey descends the stairs, feeling optimistic for the first time since he got home.

 TREY
 Sorry about earlier. I know you
 were just worried about me.

CHLOE (O.S.)
(from kitchen)
Oh, don't worry about it, baby. I
understand everything now.

TREY
Good. Maybe we can finally get some
sleep after--

He stops at the bottom of the stairs. The living room is
destroyed -- furniture overturned, blood spatters on the
walls, stakes scattered across the floor.

TREY
What the hell happened down here?

CHLOE (O.S.)
(cheerfully)
Just some redecorating! Come to the
kitchen!

TREY
(approaching the kitchen
cautiously)
Chloe? Where's everyone else?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Trey enters the kitchen to find Chloe standing at the
counter, her back to him.

She's still covered in blood, but she's humming softly as she
works with something on the cutting board.

CHLOE
(not turning around)
Perfect timing! Dinner's almost
ready.

TREY
Dinner? Babe, it's like three in
the morning.

CHLOE
(still working, cheerful)
I know! But I got so hungry waiting
for you to get out of the shower.

Trey notices dark stains on the kitchen floor, leading from
the basement door to where Chloe is standing.

TREY
Clo...what are you doing?

CHLOE
(finally turning around)
Making us a meal!

She turns to face him, and Trey sees she's holding what looks like a human finger, examining it like a piece of produce.

TREY
(backing away)
Jesus Christ! What is that?!

CHLOE
(looking at the finger)
I think it's Jordan's. Hard to tell
now that they're all...the same.

Her eyes are completely black, and her smile is too wide for her face.

CHLOE
The best part is, we don't have to
DoorDash everything anymore! Fresh
food, right here in the house!

TREY
What the fuck is going on here?

CHLOE
(tilting her head)
I solved our food problem! And our
people problem! Two birds, one
stone!

She gestures toward the basement door.

CHLOE
They're all downstairs if you want
to say hello.

She takes a bite of the finger like it's a carrot stick.

CHLOE
(chewing)
Mmm. Jordan always was a little
salty.

She walks over to the counter and picks up a wooden stake with a garlic clove impaled on the end.

She takes a big bite of the garlic, then bites into the wooden stake itself, splintering the wood with her teeth.

CHLOE
(mouth full)
Turns out garlic goes great with
stakes!

She swallows the garlic and wood with a big GULP.

She grabs another garlic clove from the counter and pops it
in her mouth like candy.

CHLOE
You must be hungry after being gone
so long.

TREY
(backing toward the door)
Clo...for real.

CHLOE
(laughing)
Oh, I'm not Chloe anymore. Yet
somehow I'm more Chloe than I've
ever been! No anxiety, no pills.
Just pure, honest hunger.

She starts moving toward him, still holding the finger.

CHLOE
And you know what I'm hungriest
for?

TREY
(reaching for the door)
What?

CHLOE
(pouting)
Are you trying to leave me again?

TREY
(pulling his hand back)
Not at all.

CHLOE
Don't lie to me, Trey.

TREY
I would never.

CHLOE
Good. Because I have a big game
night planned for us too.

TREY
What kind of game?

CHLOE
The one where I find out what you
taste like when you're really,
truly terrified.

TREY
Sounds intense.

CHLOE
(studying him)
You're not scared.

She moves to the kitchen table, pulls out her phone and sets
a timer.

CHLOE
But I have an idea that might help.
Three minutes, okay?

TREY
Three minutes for what?

CHLOE
Your final three minutes as the
Trey I fell in love with.

The timer starts counting down: 2:59... 2:58...

TREY
What happens after three minutes?

CHLOE
That's up to you.

She circles around him slowly, like a predator.

CHLOE
Tell me about my mom's house. The
real story this time.

TREY
I already told you.

CHLOE
You told me she wasn't there. But I
can smell her on you, even after
your shower.

Timer: 2:30... 2:29...

CHLOE
What did you see there?

TREY
(hesitating)
She was... feeding on someone. A neighbor.

CHLOE
And when she saw you?

TREY
She smiled. Asked if I wanted to try some. Said it would help me understand you better.

Timer: 2:00... 1:59...

CHLOE
Did you?

TREY
No. I ran. She caught me at the door, tried to bite me. That's how I got these marks.

CHLOE
So you were marked. Claimed.

TREY
By a crazy woman having a breakdown.

CHLOE
Is that what you think this is? A breakdown?

She picks up the stake with garlic still impaled on it.

She takes a big bite of the garlic, then bites into the stake again, splintering it with her teeth.

CHLOE
(chewing wood)
Does this look like a breakdown to you?

Timer: 1:30... 1:29...

TREY
How are you doing that?

CHLOE
Turns out I don't have to follow
the rules anymore.

TREY
What rules?

CHLOE
Your rules. Society's rules. The
little voice that says "Don't eat
the wooden stake, Chloe. It's not
good for you." Or the voice that
says "That garlic will kill you,
Chloe." People and their silly
little ideas.

She swallows the wood and garlic with a satisfied smile.

CHLOE
God, I'm still so hungry.

Timer: 1:00... 0:59...

TREY
For what?

CHLOE
(studying his face)
I'll know it when I taste it.

TREY
Where are the others, Chloe?

CHLOE
What others?

TREY
Jordan. Jess. Lexy. Where are they?

CHLOE
Oh, them? They're downstairs.

Timer: 0:30... 0:29...

TREY
Doing what?

CHLOE
(moving toward the
basement door)
Playing together. It's game night,
remember?

TREY
That was last night.

CHLOE
Every night is game night now.

Timer: 0:15... 0:14...

TREY
Chloe, I need you to hear
something. Will you listen to me?

CHLOE
Pfft. Fine.

TREY
I apologize for lying to you about
your mom. I wanted to tell you, but
everyone was freaking out. I was
trying to protect you. Because I
love you. Even like this.

CHLOE
(hand on basement door)
Prove it.

The timer hits 0:00 and BEEPS.

Chloe yanks open the basement door.

A wave of putrid air rushes up from below, carrying the
stench of blood and decay. Wet, rhythmic pulsing sounds echo
from the darkness.

TREY
Jesus, what is that smell?

CHLOE
Hey guys! Trey's ready to take his
turn!

The pulsing stops. Then, slow dragging sounds, like something
large being pulled across concrete.

JORDAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
(still recognizably him
but strained)
Trey? Is that... is that really
Trey?

JESS'S VOICE
(overlapping, desperate)
We've been waiting... we're so
hungry... but we remember you...

LEXY'S VOICE
 (sing-song but with
 underlying sadness)
 Come play with us, Trey... like we
 used to...

The dragging sound gets closer to the bottom of the stairs.

CHLOE
 Come on up! Don't be shy!

A wet, sliding sound as something begins ascending the stairs. In the darkness, Trey can make out a writhing mass of flesh with multiple limbs protruding at impossible angles.

THE MERGED THING
 (all three voices,
 harmonizing but retaining
 individual inflections)
 Trey... Trey... we missed you,
 man...

A hand emerges from the mass, reaching toward the top of the stairs. Then another. Then a third, all stretching upward.

The merged thing reaches the top of the stairs.

Trey can see faces pushing through the surface of the flesh -- sometimes Jordan's, sometimes Jess's, sometimes Lexy's -- appearing and disappearing like drowning victims, but their expressions show flickers of their old selves.

JORDAN'S FACE
 We didn't mean for this to happen,
 man... we just wanted the fear to
 stop...

JESS'S FACE
 Welcome to game night... I tried to
 keep us together, but...

LEXY'S FACE
 Is that sausage pizza in your
 pants? Or are you just happy to see
 what's left of us?

THE MERGED THING
 We're still your friends...
 somewhere in here...

It begins to move into the kitchen, leaving a trail of black blood. Stakes protrude from various points on its surface like quills.

CHLOE
You said you love me even like
this.

TREY
I do.

CHLOE
Then choose. Kill the thing that
used to be your friends...

She moves behind the merged creature, which turns its
multiple faces toward Trey.

CHLOE
Or let it consume you, and we can
all be together forever. No more
fear. No more pain.

TREY
Those aren't the only options.

CHLOE
Aren't they?

TREY
Chloe, please. This isn't you. The
woman I love wouldn't do this.

CHLOE
The woman you love was broken.
Anxious. Afraid of everything.

She watches as the merged thing corners Trey against the
counter.

CHLOE
I fixed myself, Trey. I fixed all
of us. No more pills, no more panic
attacks, no more sleepless nights.
And now I can fix you too.

TREY
(as the thing reaches for
him)
I don't need fixing.

CHLOE
Everyone needs fixing. Don't you
see? We were all so scared, so
broken...

The merged thing's hands are inches from Trey's face. He can smell the decay, see the individual teeth and eyes embedded in its surface. But in those eyes, he catches glimpses of recognition, of his friends still trapped inside.

TREY

(closing his eyes)

I love you, Chloe. I love the girl who cried during Hallmark movies. Who needed three pills to leave the house. Who called her mom every night.

The merged thing hesitates, its multiple faces turning toward Chloe with something like longing.

TREY

(eyes still closed)

Jordan, I love that you built those barricades because you wanted to protect us. Jess, I love that you organized everything because you cared if we survived. Lexy, I love that you researched everything because you were trying to understand.

JORDAN'S FACE

(emerging more clearly,
almost himself again)

I... I just wanted everyone to be safe...

JESS'S FACE

(appearing, more human)

I just wanted us to have a plan...

LEXY'S FACE

(surfacing, confused)

I just wanted to know what was real...

TREY

(opening his eyes, looking
directly at Chloe)

The girl who loved me so much she was willing to let me go if I came back changed. But here's the thing--

He looks at all of them -- the creature, Chloe, the faces in the mass.

TREY

Being scared, being anxious, being broken -- that wasn't a bug. That was the feature. That was you caring so much about life, about each other, that it hurt.

For a moment, something human flickers in Chloe's black eyes. The creature stops reaching for him.

CHLOE

(almost herself)

But... it hurt so much, Trey...

TREY

I know. But that pain meant something mattered. You traded your humanity to stop feeling scared, but scared meant you were still alive.

CHLOE

(breaking down)

We just... we just wanted it to stop...

TREY

But I'm not letting you in. Not like this.

The creature convulses, and suddenly the individual faces become more distinct, more desperate.

But Chloe's face contorts in rage and desperation.

CHLOE

NO! WE'RE PERFECT TOGETHER! NO MORE FEAR! NO MORE PAIN!

The merged thing suddenly convulses, its multiple faces turning toward Chloe in unison, but now they look frightened of what she's become.

THE MERGED THING

Perfect... perfect... but are we?

Chloe's scream triggers something primal in the flesh-mass. It begins to pulse violently, expanding and contracting like a massive heart, but the faces within look panicked, trapped.

CHLOE

SHOW HIM! SHOW HIM HOW PERFECT WE ARE!

The merged creature erupts against its will. Flesh explodes outward in wet, pulsing waves. Arms and legs stretch like taffy, reaching for both Chloe and Trey simultaneously.

The thing's mass doubles, then triples in size as it fills the kitchen.

But now the voices are screaming in horror, not ecstasy:

JORDAN'S FACE

I don't want this... I don't want this!

JESS'S FACE

Make it stop... please make it stop...

LEXY'S FACE

We're still in here... we're still trapped in here...

Chloe throws herself into the writhing mass, but now it feels less like ecstatic abandon and more like desperate escape from her own consciousness.

CHLOE

(as she's absorbed)

WE ARE PERFECT! WE HAVE TO BE PERFECT!

Her body melds with the creature, her face joining the others as they push through the surface. The thing grows larger still, flesh flowing like liquid across the floor, up the walls, consuming everything in its path.

But the faces that appear are no longer orgasmic -- they're anguished, pleading.

CHLOE'S FACE

(from within the mass)

Can't you see it?! We don't hurt anymore! We don't feel anything anymore!

ALL FOUR FACES

(appearing simultaneously)

We don't feel... we don't feel... we don't feel...

The merged mass of four bodies writhes, but it's not pleasure -- it's the writhing of something trying to escape itself.

Black blood sprays from every surface as the thing reaches toward Trey with dozens of arms, but the reaching feels less like attack and more like pleading.

ALL FOUR VOICES

Help us... help us... HELP US...

The creature fills the entire kitchen now, a pulsating mass of flesh and despair, reaching its breaking point as the individuals trapped within fight against what they've become.

TREY

(backed against the wall)

No.

He doesn't fight. He simply stands there, arms open, looking directly at where all their faces keep surfacing in the writhing mass of flesh.

TREY

No. I won't help you stay like this. Your caring, your fear, your pain -- that was your humanity.

The creature stops mid-lunge. All four faces become more human, more present.

TREY

And I'm not going to help you throw it away.

CHLOE'S FACE

(emerging, almost back to herself)

But Trey... it hurts...

TREY

Good. Let it hurt. Let it matter.

The lack of fear, the presence of love and acceptance, hits the creature like poison. It begins to convulse, but not in pleasure -- in recognition.

THE MERGED THING

(all voices, with dawning horror and relief)

We... we threw it away... we threw away everything that made us... us...

The creature starts to collapse in on itself, the flesh beginning to separate as the emotional connections that bound them in fear dissolve into something else --

Acceptance, love, the willingness to feel pain because it means being human.

JORDAN'S FACE

(appearing)

We just wanted to stop being
afraid...

JESS'S FACE

(surfacing)

But the fear was keeping us
human...

LEXY'S FACE

(emerging)

We chose wrong...we chose so
wrong...

CHLOE'S FACE

(emerging one last time)

Trey... I'm so sorry... I love--

And then the whole thing implodes with a wet, final SPLAT!

Blood and chunks of flesh spray across the kitchen walls, covering everything in a coating of black gore! Trey stands in the center of it all, completely drenched but unharmed.

He slowly opens his eyes and looks around at the carnage:

Bits of his friends and girlfriend splattered across every surface. He reaches up and wipes a piece of what might have been Chloe's hair from his cheek.

TREY

I love you too.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - EARLY MORNING

Trey sits on the front steps of the house, still covered in dried blood and gore. He stares out at the empty street.

The neighborhood is eerily quiet. No cars. No people. Just the sound of wind through the trees and the distant hum of power lines that have finally been restored.

He pulls out his phone. The screen shows dozens of missed calls and messages from the past day. He doesn't read them.

Instead, he looks up at the sky. For the first time in thirteen days, there's a faint glow on the horizon.

He stands up slowly, his body stiff and aching.

As he walks down the driveway, he glances back at the house one last time.

The windows are dark. The barricades still cover the doors and windows like scars. It looks like a tomb.

He turns away and continues walking down the street. As he reaches the end of the block, the first rays of actual sunlight break through the clouds.

Trey stops walking and tilts his face toward the sun.

Then he sees his reflection in a car window on the street.

He's covered in the blood of everyone he loved. His eyes are hollow, haunted.

For just a moment, his reflection seems to linger a beat longer than his movement. But then he blinks, and it's just him again.

He starts walking again. The sun climbs higher, and the world grows brighter.

But we stay on the car window, where REGINA'S FACE reflects in the glass, then follows in Trey's direction.

THE END